

## Why Should You Believe Jesus Is The Son of God?

1 John 5:6-12

### Introduction

1. Bertrand Russell lived from 1872-1970. He was one of the major atheistic philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He authored more than 100 books, wrote a 3-volume autobiography and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. One of his most well known books was *Why I Am Not A Christian* (1927). In it he argued that all organized religions are the residue of the barbaric past that dwindled to mere hypocritical superstitions that have no basis in reality. On one occasion Russell was asked what he would say to God if he found himself standing before God. His answer: **“I should reproach Him for not giving us enough evidence.”**
2. I strongly suspect that Bertrand Russell’s problem with God had to do more with his personal morality than the evidence. A serial adulterer, Russell attempted to justify his adulterous escapades in a book entitled *Marriage and Morals* (1929). He argued that humans are not naturally monogamous and so we should not expect they will be.
3. Still, taking Russell at his word, I would take it that he must have never read, or at least read carefully, 1 John 5:6-12. Here the apostle John, an eyewitness of our Lord’s life, passion and resurrection brings to the witness stand no less than 6 reliable witnesses who make the case that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God.
  - × Verses 6-12 come together around the theme of witness or testimony, with some form of the Greek word *martus* appearing 9 times.
  - × John believes there is more than enough evidence to prove that Jesus is the Son of God who provides eternal life to all who believe in Him.
  - × Testimony comes from different, but complementary witnesses.
  - × John draws our attention particularly to the career of Jesus from His baptism, to His crucifixion, to our conversion.

### **I. Believe the witness of His baptism. 5:6-8**

- 1) On August 9, 1874 Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled “The Three Witnesses” on 1 John 5:8. He began that message with these words, “Christianity puts forth very lofty claims. She claims to be the true faith, and the only true one. She avows her teachings to be divine, and therefore infallible; while for her great Teacher, the Son of God, she demands divine worship, and the unreserved confidence and obedience of men... Now, to justify such his claims, the gospel ought to provide strong evidence, and it does so. It does not lack for external evidence.”
- 2) Spurgeon’s statement anticipated the spiritual fog and declension we now find ourselves in.
- 3) “Prince Charles Launches Campaign for Interfaith Cooperation”
 

LONDON (RNS) A campaign for members of all the different faiths in Britain to go out of their way to aid those of other faiths has been launched by Prince Charles, heir to the British throne. “Over the past year we have seen -- internationally, nationally and locally -- all too many examples of intolerance to others,” the Prince of Wales said Monday (April 29, 2002) in Birmingham, England. “Tolerance is an easy word to pronounce, but it seems to be very difficult to enact in our lives. And yet it is such a tragedy that, when the various faith communities have so much in

common, its members should so often be divided by the different ways we have of interpreting the inner meaning of our existence.”

× “Non-believers on Rise, Conference Hears”

MONTREAL (RNS) The number of Canadians who claim to have no religion at all more than doubled in 13 years to 27 percent in 2000, according to a senior social scientist with Statistics Canada. “By any means this is an extraordinary shift,” Paul Reed told last week’s Pluralism, Religion and Public Policy conference at McGill University. British Columbia led the country with 55 percent of residents claiming to be non-believers, Reed said. It was followed by the Prairies at 33 percent, Ontario (28 percent), Atlantic Canada (17 percent) and Quebec (7 percent). Reed said that while 43 percent of Canadian adults say they never attend church, a growing number is looking outside organized religion for spiritual fulfillment.

× The apostle John also anticipated this type of theological and spiritual ambiguity and indifference. His counsel, however, is quite different: **DO NOT LOOK AT OTHERS, OUTSIDE OR INSIDE. LOOK TO THE MAN FROM GALILEE! LOOK TO JESUS!**

× John begins by saying: Look at the witness of His baptism.

Came by water. Water (4x) in vs. 6-8. Water refers not to the water of birth or the water from His side in John 19:34-35. It is a reference to His baptism, an event when the Triune God was revealed and the Son was anointed for His ministry. Matthew 3:16-17 says, “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I was well pleased.’” The Father’s declaration combines Psalm 2:7 with Isaiah 42:1. He will be a suffering King, a servant King. Here the witness of His baptism.

## II. Believe the witness of His crucifixion. 5:6-8

× Jesus the Christ came by water (His baptism) but also by blood (3x). Some believe, putting water and blood together, this refers to:

1) Baptism and the Lord’s supper.

2) The water and blood from His side when He was crucified (John 19:34-35).

However, the historic context out of which John wrote, and the false teaching that was troubling the church, provides the interpretive key we need.

× A Gnostic named Cerinthus claimed that the man Jesus was born a normal, ordinary human being, but became God’s special agent when the heavenly Christ descended on Him at His baptism. You might say God adopted Him as His Son at this point. However, the Christ-spirit or heavenly Christ abandoned Him before His death (cf. His cry in Matthew 27:46). Consequently it was only the man Jesus, now forsaken by the Christ-spirit, who died on the cross. His death had no saving, redemptive value.

× John counters this. Jesus came by the water of His baptism and the blood of His cross.

× Though modernists might package their rejection of Christ and His atoning death on the cross a bit differently, the bottom line is the same, Calvary and the cross and the Son of God hanging there is not of ultimate significance for my salvation.

- × “Barna Report” (Fall 2002)
  - 50 percent of adults embraced a works-based approach to salvation, agreeing that anyone who “is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in heaven.” Surprisingly, some 40 percent of self-professed Protestants also agreed with the statement.
  - 51 percent agreed with the Catholic belief that “praying to deceased saints can have a positive effect in a person’s life.” Surprisingly, one out of six evangelicals agreed with the statement.
  - A large minority – 42 percent – believed that Jesus sinned while on earth.
  - Or to really make the point: “There is nothing divine in the blood of the cross.” (Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 61).
- × In contrast to these perspectives, the N.T. scholar I. Howard Marshall says,
  - “As soon as we reduce the death of Jesus to that of a mere man, so soon do we lose the cardinal point of the N.T. doctrine of the atonement, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; in the last analysis, the doctrine of the atonement means that God himself bears our sins and shows that the final reality in the universe is his sin-bearing, pardoning love, but if Jesus is not the Son of God, His death can no longer bear this significance.” (Marshall, 233-34).

### III. **Believe the witness of the Holy Spirit. 5:6-8**

- × We are told in verse 6 that the Spirit bears witness (cont.) to the fact that Jesus is the Christ. Verse 8 tells us His witness is in agreement with the witness of the water (baptism) and the blood (cross).
- × John 15:26 says, “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” The witness of the Holy Spirit of God is needed because Jesus’ deity, His perfect work of atonement, and His exclusive way to God is a scandal and a stumbling block to the world.
  - Only 70% of United Methodists agree that “the Bible is God’s Word and all it says is true. 42% believe that all religions are equally true. *Good News*, Nov/Dec 1998 (page 11).
  - Among Lutherans of various denominations, 67% say they “agree” or “probably agree” with the statement: “Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.” *What in the World!* Vol. 24, No. 11, 1998 (page 1).
- × The 3 fold witness probably reflects the O.T. requirement found in Deut. 19:15 which says, “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.” The Spirit is given priority because it is He who testifies through the water and the blood. All three agree: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
- × Verse 7 in the KJV, though a true statement, was not a part of John’s letter when he wrote it. This is an issue of (1) the actual text of 1 John, not the truth of verse 7 and (2) the transmission of the text not the inspiration of the text.
- × James Merritt well says of the Holy Spirit, “The witness of the Spirit is God’s witness to us, in us, and through us. Just as the arrow of a compass always point towards the North, the Spirit of God always points to Jesus.

#### IV. **Believe the witness of the Father. 5:9, 10b**

- × John continues to march his witnesses before us. Now his greatest witness takes the stand: Father God. John argues from the lesser to the greater, from men to God. If you believe the former, it is sheer foolishness to deny the latter.
- × John said in John 5:37, “The Father Himself, who sent me, has testified of Me.
- × Testified occurs 4x in v. 9 and 2x in v. 10. Its last occurrence in v. 9 is in the perfect tense. His past witness to His Son through the water, blood and Spirit is still valid today. To deny this is to call God a liar concerning what He says about His Son. His Son and only His Son is to be the sole object of our faith.
- × “Pope Makes First Major Changes to the Rosary in Centuries” by Peggy Polk, c. 2002 *Religion News Service*.

VATICAN CITY -- Pope John Paul II on Wednesday (Oct. 16, 2002) announced the first major changes to the rosary in centuries. The Roman Catholic pontiff, who has called the rosary his “favorite prayer,” marked the start of the 25<sup>th</sup> year of his reign by issuing the Apostolic Letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae on the Most Holy Rosary and proclaiming October 2002 to October 2003 the Year of the Holy Rosary. “Is there a better instrument of prayer than the rosary for the demanding but extraordinarily rich tasks of contemplating the face of Christ together with Mary?” the pope asked.

- × I must humbly disagree with the Pontiff’s instruction. I do not need Mary now or ever. I need only Jesus. Why? Because the Father says so. As Spurgeon put it, “God is to be believed if all men contradict Him. Let God be true and every man a liar. One word of God ought to sweep away ten thousand words of men, whether they be philosophers of today or sages of antiquity” (“Faith and The Witness Upon Which It Is Founded”). To this we may add popes, theologians and any others as well.

#### V. **Believe the witness in your heart. 5:10**

- × John ties our outward confession of Christ to the inward confidence we have in our heart.
- × This inward testimony balances and complements the historical witness of the water and blood, and the heavenly witness of God the Father.
- × Further belief in the Son cannot be separated from belief in the Father or vice versa (cf. 1:22-23).
- × *The great sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is often spoken of very lightly and in a very trifling spirit, as though it were scarcely any sin at all; yet, according to my text, and, indeed, according to the whole tenor of the Scriptures, unbelief is the giving of God the lie, and what can be worse? I earnestly desire that every believer may see his unbelief at this time in its true colours, and perhaps, as the Spirit of God enables him to see the evil of past unbelief, he will be so shocked at himself, and horrified at his crime, that he will continue in it no longer, but yield himself to the faith. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, that grace may be given to the unbelieving, that they may now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.* (Spurgeon, Dec. 13, 1874) “A Solemn Impeachment of Unbelievers.”
- × Paul said in Romans 10:9-10, “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

- × And again in Romans 8:16, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”
- × *Let me further remark, that the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith is sufficient evidence of eternal life. “I do not know,” says one, “when I was converted.” My dear friend, have you the Son of God? Do you trust in Jesus Christ? That is quite enough. If though canst from the heart say, “I trust Jesus Christ,” though thou hast no spiritual biography worth recording, thou hast life. Many aged persons have either forgotten their birthdays, or have lost the register, and cannot tell exactly how old they are; but that does not at all prove that they are not alive; so your not knowing precisely when you were converted, is no evidence that you are not saved. (Spurgeon, June 26, 1867, “Alive or Dead – Which?)*

#### **VI. Believe the witness of eternal life. 5:11-12**

- × Eternal life, a God-quality life both in quality and duration is vitally connected and only connected to God’s Son.
- × Having the Son equals having life. Not having the Son equals not having life. It is that simple, though many try and make it more complex.
  - Charismatic Bishop Carlton Pearson of Tulsa, OK boldly touts, “I exclude nobody from the redemptive work of the cross. I believe that Jesus redeemed the entire world.” To Jewish leaders he said, “I don’t want to convert anybody. I just want to convince everybody.” (RNS).
- × “If you do not have Jesus, you do not have life. You are a walking dead man. You are a corpse waiting on the casket.” James Merritt.
- × God has given us His Word and His Word is clear. If you will repent of your sin and trust in Jesus you will be saved and you can know you are saved. Confess you are a sinner, and that you cannot save yourself no matter what kind of good works you do. Believe, trust, receive Jesus and what He did on the cross as the perfect payment for your sins. Put your total and only trust in Him and you will be saved. That is what God has said. That is what you must believe.

#### **Conclusion**

- 1) PBS tackled the soul-searching following 9-11 with “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero.” It aired on Sept. 3 and 11, 2002. On the show an agnostic photographer named Luca Babini said she doesn’t know if she ever believed in God, but she now wishes “there was a God that I could access and that it could be proven that I can access Him. I wish God had a telephone number since Sept. 11,” she said (RNS, 2002).
- 2) Well I have good news for Luca Babini and others like her. God does have a phone number and anyone call Him at anytime and get straight through. Just dial SON-GOD-JESUS. Through that number, but only that number, God can be accessed from anyplace and at anytime. The operator is on the line and waiting. All you have to do is make the call.